



**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Wisconsin Women's Council – September 2, 2015
WI Dept. of Administration, 101 East Wilson St., Madison, WI**

Mary Jo Baas, Chair

Board Members Present: Mary Jo Baas, Patty Cadorin, Karen Katz, Michelle Mettner, Katie Mnuk, Kim Nickel, Jessie Nicholson, Carrie Richard, Jessica Ward, Senator Janis Ringhand. Not Present: Cindy Block, Representative Janel Brandtjen, Representative Mary Czaja, Senator Dave Hansen. A quorum of Board members was present.

Others present: Christine Lidbury, Executive Director; Representative Jill Billings, Representative LaTonya Johnson.

1. Welcome and Introductions. The meeting was called to order at 11:30AM.

Welcoming Jessica Ward to the Board.

New Women's Council Board Member. Jessica Ward was introduced. Ward is a policy advisor in the Office of Senator Leah Vukmir. She replaces Heather Smith. Heather Smith was thanked and commended for her Board service. Christine Lidbury noted that Smith has served multiple appointments to the Council Board and has been a valued resource and advisor in advancing the Council's work.

2. Approval of Minutes. Mary Jo Baas moved to approve the minutes of the June 3, 2015 Board Meeting. Second by Karen Katz. Approved unanimously.

3. Program Updates Program Update

- Karen Katz reported on the public education and outreach program, Human Trafficking, held June 18, 2015, in Wausau. Katz reported that the event was very successful, drawing a large audience and impressive expert panel. The program began with a press conference featuring John Vaudreuil, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin. She commended Christine on organizing the program and partnering with The Women's Community and local law enforcement. She highlighted the value of going into communities around the state to facilitate programs and to give visibility to the Women's Council

Lidbury noted that Karen Katz is a long-time Wausau resident and was invaluable in making connections in the local community. She reported that the US Attorney stayed for the entire

program, featuring a panel including Jane Grahams Jennings, Executive Director of The Women's Community; Jenniffer Price, Wisconsin Department of Justice, Wausau Police Department Captain Matthew Barnes. Marathon County Chief Deputy Chad Billeb also spoke at the press. Media interviews we set up with selected speakers and local television and news reporters. The event had excellent local media coverage. The event was hosted in partnership with The Women's Community, local domestic violence/sexual assault shelter and advocacy organization.

- The Women's Council is working the partnership with the WI Dept. of Justice Crime Victims Council – approved at the June Women's Council meeting. Outreach events are being planned and schedule, with target locations in Janesville, LaCrosse, Bayfield, and Shawano, and possibly a follow up program in Wausau. The schedule and additional program information is expected to be available in December.

4. AB267/SB200 Safe Harbor Legislation

Lidbury explained that “Safe Harbor” laws are a major issue of policy and discussion around child sex trafficking. The legislation that prohibit the charging of children with prostitution and mandate provision of services by DCF. Representatives Johnson and Billings are the bill sponsors and are here to talk about why they are supporting this law for Wisconsin and to ask the Council to consider supporting the bill, as part of the Council's anti-human trafficking program of work.

The Council welcomed Assembly Members Representative Johnson and Billings. The bill eliminates the crime of child prostitution from state statutes and requires child welfare agencies to investigate all cases of child sexual exploitation.

According to Representative Billings, child victims of human sex trafficking are just that—victims—and should not be treated like criminals for actions that are beyond their control. Sexually exploited youth need our assistance to escape their captors, but first they must trust that state authorities are, in fact, the ‘good guys’. Providing a Safe Harbor for these children is the first step towards building this trust.

The bill prohibits the charging of a minor with the crime of prostitution. By adopting a Safe Harbor law Wisconsin will no longer conflict with the Federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act, which treats coerced children as victims, even if they have engaged in criminal prostitution activity. The bill also aligns the discrepancy in current Wisconsin statutory rape and child enticement provisions which declare children unable to consent to sexual activity.

Under current Wisconsin law, the Department of Children's and Families is permitted, but not required to investigate reports of child abuse when the abuse is carried out by a “non-caregiver.” LRB-0733 would require an investigation by a child welfare agency, in cases where a child is suspected of being forced to engage in prostitution.

They noted that victims need safe shelter from their trafficker and appropriate services so that they can safely return to school, their families, and their communities. Moreover, the physical

and emotional trauma caused by sex-trafficking is extremely complex and it is our duty to provide these kids the opportunity to heal and reenter their communities.

The legislation can out of a policy symposium held earlier this year and was developed with input and support of social service providers and policy advocates.

They reported that human trafficking has been documented in over half of Wisconsin's 72 counties and that a story by the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission identified 77 minors as having been sex-trafficked during 2013 in Milwaukee alone and 25 were between the ages of 12 and 15.

Safe Harbor became Federal law in 2000 as part of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act. Wisconsin would become the twenty-third state to enact a form of Safe Harbor for minors, along with neighboring states Minnesota, Illinois, and Michigan.

Discussion ensues. It was suggested that the WI Department of Justice does not currently support the legislation because it removes an important tool for prosecutors to identify trafficked victims and seek treatment programs, also using prosecution as an alternative to sentencing to ensure victims are helped, rather than just returned to the street.

Lidbury asked if the Council wishes to consider taking a position on the legislation. Discussion ensued. Motion by Katz to support this effort. Failed for lack of second and withdrawn.

Council member indicated that they would follow this and other anti-human trafficking legislation and perhaps at a future meeting seek additional briefings, including by the WI DOJ, before taking a position. The speakers were thanked for their presentation.

5. 2015 Update on the Status of Women and Elected Office. Lidbury reported that the Council had spring and summer interns that assisted with the data collection and analyses. The report was currently in drafting and asked if any Council members would be willing to serve as reads for the report. Baas, Katz and Nickel offered to assist. Lidbury expected the report to be released before December.
6. Trailblazer Policy Manual. Following the 2014 Trailblazer Award nominations and issues with nominations that required the assistance of DOA legal counsel, it was suggested the Council develop a policy manual for the program. Work has been underway since summer and the manual is expected to be ready to review by year end. Patty Cadorin requested to be included in the review process.
7. There were no public or board announcements.
8. Motion to Adjourn. Moved Jessie Nichol; second, Mettner. Approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Lidbury